
TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

TO: Board of Selectmen
FROM: Maria E. Capriola – Town Manager
DATE: August 20, 2021

CORONAVIRUS UPDATE

We are monitoring the state's municipal COVID alert system and are currently at "orange" status, indicating that we have more than 10 but less than 15 COVID cases per 100,000 residents. For the week ending August 7th, Simsbury had 19 new cases, and for the week ending August 14th, 28 new cases, or 47 new cases over the most recent two week period. In a short period of time, we are rapidly approaching the state's COVID-19 red alert municipal status. This is the highest level of risk in the alert system. Through contact tracing conducted by the Health District, they are seeing out of state travel, large gatherings, and household spread as our predominant exposures.

Hartford County and the state of Connecticut are currently at "high" risk. In areas with substantial or high transmission, the CDC recommends that everyone (including fully vaccinated individuals) wear a mask in public indoor settings to help prevent spread of the Delta variant and to protect others.

This afternoon I will be issuing a municipal executive order requiring that face coverings be worn in Simsbury by all individuals over the age of two, regardless of vaccination status, in all indoor public spaces effective 12:01AM Monday, August 23, 2021. Exceptions to this include: a person with a medical condition, behavioral condition, or disability in which wearing a mask is contrary to their health and safety; anyone under the age of two years; a person who is eating or drinking; a person who is in an indoor space when they are alone or otherwise separated from others by a partition and at least six feet of distance, such as but not limited to an office setting. This order also applies to private establishments except for residential dwellings.

Please know that making the decision to issue the municipal executive order regarding face coverings is not one that I made lightly. Throughout the pandemic the Town has taken steps to carefully balance the safety and health of our residents and patrons, while keeping essential services and infrastructure fully operational. This mask mandate will help to ensure that continues.

Other towns in Connecticut have begun taking this measure, including our neighbor Bloomfield. Many chief executive officers from towns and cities throughout Connecticut are urging the Governor to issue a state-wide face covering mandate for indoor public spaces, including myself. Both the Southeastern and Capitol Region Council of Governments have issued letters to the Governor requesting a state-wide face covering mandate; these two councils of governments represent 60 towns, or 35% of all Connecticut towns.

New data shows that fully vaccinated people who are infected with the Delta variant might be infectious and might potentially spread the virus to others. The Health District has asked towns to share some key points regarding emerging COVID related information:

- The Delta variant is much more contagious than other virus strains, spreading twice as easily from person to person

- The Delta variant is now the predominant strain, representing more than 80% of the cases in the Northeast
- Our area is seeing vaccine breakthrough cases, however, most of these cases experience mild symptoms
- Almost all of the hospitalizations and deaths are occurring among unvaccinated individuals
- Vaccine breakthrough cases are contributing to additional spread—we are seeing this in households and group gatherings.
- Anyone experiencing COVID like symptoms should seek a test regardless of vaccine status.
- COVID symptoms are similar to cold, flu and allergy symptoms. Do not assume it is a cold or allergies - GET TESTED
- Because the Delta variant is spreading quickly and easily it is critically important that individuals experiencing symptoms and/or have been exposed get tested, isolate and wear a mask until they get their test results.

Simsbury volunteers have been generously donating cloth face coverings to the Town for our community. To date our generous volunteers have donated over 5,700 hand-made face coverings. If you are a Simsbury resident, business, or an employee of a Simsbury business, you may request free cloth face coverings by contacting the Simsbury Senior Center at (860) 658-3273.

The Town has drafted an easily printable poster for the business community to hang stating that face masks are required upon entry. It is available for printing in 8.5 x 11 inch paper as well as 11 x 17 inch paper.

A copy of the municipal executive order, printable poster, and forthcoming press release will be available later today through the Town's email subscription service, the Town's website, and the Town's social media accounts.